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The analysis, occupying only some hundred pages, is of course highly condensed. As an introduction to it one might well use the review—an outline sketch—by H. H. Howorth (*Nature*, 1919, No. 2611, Vol. 104, Nov. 13, pp. 273-274). The second half of the book, another hundred pages, is a bibliography given as “a starting point for further research.” Naturally most of the works are in Russian.

THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS

LOUISE F. BROWN. **The Freedom of the Seas.** xvi and 262 pp.; bibliogr. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1919. \$2.00. 7½ x 5 inches.

This is a concise and brilliantly written history of one of the most difficult of international problems. The phrase “freedom of the seas” has been in everybody’s mouth during the last five years without any general understanding of what it implies, and without appreciation of the fact that it has been similarly debated on the occasion of every war for the last five hundred years. It was on this issue that we fought for independence in the eighteenth century; that we fought England in 1812; and that we entered the world war in 1917.

Literally interpreted, “freedom of the seas” would mean the complete immunity, from capture or molestation, of private property on the seas at all times. It would also mean that trade might be conducted everywhere without discrimination of nationality or without the impediment of protective tariffs—in this sense implying “free trade.” But the term has never been used as connoting complete immunity or comprehensive free trade. It has been employed, almost exclusively, in the form of protest. “When the question has been raised in the past there lay behind it either resentment at inequalities of opportunity in overseas markets or jealousy of the power that controlled the seas” (p. 237).

When Portugal and Spain opened routes to the Indies, it was natural that they should seek to monopolize those routes. The other maritime nations, such as France, England, and Holland, refused, however, to accept this doctrine and fought for “the freedom of the seas” to the extent of their power. Nevertheless, the theory of exclusive or special rights in sea areas has been maintained down to the present time. It was not until 1859 that the tolls imposed by Denmark on ships entering the Baltic Sea were abolished. The United States claimed the Bering Sea as a *mare clausum* in the eighties, though it had protested a similar claim on the part of Russia in 1821. In the late war, the right to monopolize portions of the sea was exercised by the sowing of mines and the proclamation of danger zones.

It is in regard to interference with commerce in time of war that the most bitter and irreconcilable differences have arisen. In such circumstances, belligerents and neutrals have equal interest in the questions of contraband and blockade, of right of search, and of the disposition and destruction of prizes. In the war “neutral commerce has been interrupted to an extent unprecedented in any previous war, and the sea lanes have been made unsafe for travel in a way that makes the days of piracy seem days of gentle usage” (p. 229). The great difficulty has been that agreements on rules to be followed during hostilities have been practically impossible of attainment, since any nation will agree to concede only what it thinks it can yield without weakening itself as a belligerent.

The term “freedom of the seas” has also been used in protest against limitations and restrictions placed upon commerce in times of peace. Thus, “with the development of modern industry, as colonies increased in importance as sources of raw materials and profitable fields of investment, the old desire to guard them for the benefit of nationals grew strong again. Mercantilism revived in new forms. . . . The extension of our navigation laws, which meant our coasting trade monopoly, to our oversea possessions, gave rise to suggestions on the part of Englishmen that it might be desirable to re-enact the British navigation laws” (p. 245).

The position of England on all these questions has been determined by the fact that for centuries she has been the paramount naval power. “The nation that rules the waves today,” says Miss Brown, “is the nation that ruled them in the days when France tried to wrest the trident from her. She claims, and with justice, that she has used her power to make and keep the seas free in time of peace. In time of war, she does not hesitate to state, the seas must be closed to her enemies. When, as in the war just ended, her enemies are the enemies of all freedom, criticism is dumb. But it will not remain dumb” (p. 237). It must be evident, indeed, to any reader of this fascinating book that the only reasonable solution of these most difficult questions is international control of the seas through the establishment of a league of nations.

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